

Congress needs to finish its work and send me a budget. It should be a budget that is fiscally responsible, that reflects the values of the American people, and that invests in the future, especially in the education of our children.

I sent such a budget to Congress in February. Among other things, my budget calls for tax credits to help communities build or modernize 6,000 schools, and grants and loans for emergency repairs in 5,000 schools a year for 5 years. The need is undeniable. The average American school building is now more than 40 years old. At least 60 percent of the schools in every State are in need of repair, and some schools actually pose health risks to students. I received a letter yesterday from some of the Nation's top health organizations, including the American Lung Association and the National Association of School Nurses. They point out that in many of our older school buildings, the air is polluted with lead, radon gas, and other substances harmful to our children's health.

These groups endorse my proposal to rebuild and repair our schools. A bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives is ready right now to pass school construction tax credits. Unfortunately, the Republican leadership continues to stand in the way and refuses to bring it to a vote. It's time for Congress to act. It's unfair to ask America's children to lift themselves up in school buildings that are falling down.

The majority party's education budget also fails to make other vital investments in education. It does not ensure the hiring of another 20,000 teachers to reduce class sizes. It denies after-school to over 1.6 million children who would get it under my balanced budget proposal. It shortchanges efforts to improve teacher quality. And it invests nothing to help States turn around failing schools or shut them down and reopen them under new management.

The continuing resolution I signed last night gives Congress 7 more days to act. That is enough time to pass a responsible budget that modernizes our schools, strengthens accountability, lowers class sizes, expands after-school, mentoring, and college opportunities for young people, and helps put a qualified teacher in every classroom. It should also be

a budget that puts more police on the street, that enforces civil rights, ensures equal pay, expands health care, and creates opportunities for all Americans to share in our strong economy through our new markets initiative.

At this time of unprecedented prosperity, there is no reason we can't put partisanship aside and make the investments we know will move our Nation forward, especially in the education of our children. By building stronger schools, we'll build a stronger America in the future.

NOTE: H.J. Res. 111, approved October 13, was assigned Public Law No. 106-306.

## **Proclamation 7365—National Character Counts Week, 2000**

*October 14, 2000*

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

The term "character" is derived from an ancient Greek word meaning "to inscribe," reflecting the conviction that character is not innate, but rather is instilled through the influence, example, and guidance of the people around us. One of our greatest responsibilities as adults and citizens, therefore, is to ensure that we teach our children, by word and deed, the values that will help them develop into men and women of strong character.

This vital endeavor begins with the family and particularly with parents, who are their children's first teachers. The process continues in our schools—not only in the classroom, but also in the hallways, in the cafeteria, and on the playing field. We have many opportunities to instill in our children the elements of good character—citizenship, fairness, compassion, honesty, tolerance, and responsibility—and it is up to every citizen and organization to make the most of these opportunities.

My Administration has strived to assist parents, caregivers, teachers, and religious and community leaders in this vital effort. We have worked with the entertainment industry to increase educational programming on television and to create a voluntary ratings

system to help parents reinforce the values they want to impart to their children. And 4 years ago, I was proud to sign legislation that requires new televisions sold in our country to include the V-chip, a device that allows parents to control the programs that their children watch on television. Recognizing the significant amount of time our children spend in school, we have also created partnerships with States under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to assist school districts in developing curriculum materials, providing teacher training, and integrating character education into the curriculum. We have funded innovative after-school programs to offer young people mentors and role models to inspire them and to engage them in productive activities at the end of the school day.

We have also promoted citizen service—one of the greatest character-building tools available to our society. Through initiatives such as America Reads, the Corporation for National and Community Service, the National Senior Service Corps, the Peace Corps, and AmeriCorps, Americans of every age, background, gender, and race are experiencing the rewards of helping others, and in the process becoming more responsible citizens. We can also teach young Americans a vital lesson about character by exercising our right to vote and participating in the democratic process—a process that Americans of notable character established more than two centuries ago.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 15 through October 21, 2000, as National Character Counts Week. I call upon the people of the United States, government officials, educators, religious, community, and business leaders to commemorate this week with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

**William J. Clinton**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., October 18, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on October 19.

## **Proclamation 7366—National Forest Products Week, 2000**

*October 14, 2000*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

### **A Proclamation**

In the early years of the 20th century, President Theodore Roosevelt challenged his fellow citizens to begin the vital task of conserving the precious natural resources with which America has been so abundantly blessed. As part of his notable conservation achievements, he consolidated 65 million acres of Federal forest reserves into the National Forest System and created the United States Forest Service to provide wise stewardship of these lands for future generations.

Today, the National Forest System comprises more than 190 million acres of forests and grasslands, a priceless remnant of the great wilderness that once stretched across our country. Whether sustaining ecosystems, supplying water, providing lumber, or offering recreation, these precious areas benefit millions of Americans.

We must continue to sustain the health and beauty of the forestlands President Roosevelt first set aside for us so many decades ago. I am proud that my Administration has made significant progress in improving the management of Federal forestlands. With science-based planning and research, we have sought to achieve a balance between strengthening protections for wildlife and water quality and providing a steady, sustainable supply of the building materials, paper products, and other commodities we need to meet the challenges of our growing economy.

America's forests have always offered us unique and irreplaceable benefits. They are a treasured inheritance, and we must ensure in this new century that our policies and actions sustain this precious legacy for the prosperity and well-being of generations to come.